DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 337 SO 012 579

AUTHOR Wise, John H.
TITLE The Value and Use of Music in Geographic Education.
PUB DATE 1 Nov 79
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the National Council for Geographic Education Conference (Mexico City, Mexico, November 1, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Geography Instruction; Higher Education; Human Geography; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Music; Music Appreciation; *Physical Geography; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This paper provides examples of how music can be used in geography instruction at the elementary, secondary, or college levels. The occasional use of music can foster imagination and promote greater aesthetic awareness with regard to landscapes and human situations. Many concepts and terms in physical geography can be lined with music. A good example is the Czech "Vltava" from the symphonic cycle "Ma Vlast" composed by Bedrich Smetana in 1874 when he was totally deaf. This composition, used in conjunction with color slides of the landscape which correlate with the music, can be used to show students the course of the river Vltava as it flows through woods and meadows, past villages, through rapids and then as a broad and noble river approaching Prague. Another example is the "1812 Overture" which, with its graphic and melodious representation of events surrounding the Battle of Borodino, can be an exciting catalyst for various interrelated concepts in lessons which range from glacial deposition to the North European plain and Soviet settlement patterns. The paper goes on to list musical selections which can be descriptive of land and sea scapes, climatic conditions, historical events and which may be evocative of the ethos and culture of political areas and national groups. (Author/RM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

JUN 0 2 1980

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY John Wise

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED186337

SO 012 579

THE VALUE AND USE OF MUSIC IN GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION

John H. Wise

University of Newcastle,
New South Wales,
Australia.

Lucy: "Beethoven wasn't great".

Schneider: "How do you mean he wasn't great?"

Lucy: "Well, he didn't get his picture on bubble-gum cards. Anyone who's really great gets his picture on bubble-gum cards".

Schneider: "Good grief!"

From A Charlie Brown Christmas

The idea that aesthetic elements have an important role in geographic studies is not new. It is evident in early geography teacher publications[1] and, at times throughout this century, has been expounded by several influential geographers. Vaughan Cornish, for example, stressed the value of a personal emotional attachment to particular places[2] and E. W. Gilbert the need for "something of the expressive and sensuous imagination of poets and painters" in geographic expression and understanding.[3] But not until the mid-1970's was music among the arts specifically identified as a likely and useful thread in the cloth of geographic studies.[4]

This paper briefly considers the use of musical extracts in geographic education. It is hoped that the examples given below will

encourage the geography teacher to reflect upon the value of using various kinds of music -- "classical", "Romantic", "light", "folk" and "pop" -- in his or her complex and demanding work. Quite intentionally the examples draw upon music not generally known to the average high school student although, conveniently for the interested teacher with a tape-recorder, they are frequently played on various radio stations and are readily accessible on inexpensive records or cassettes in the western world. However, unless one truly feels the need for music to be used in teaching and is enthusiastically careful in its choice and classroom implementation, it is better avoided completely. Students are particularly sensitive to any approach not implicitly seen to be natural and an essential part of the teacher's own personality and professional make-up. Similarly, unless one is to be exposed at times to charges of "gimmickry", the use of music as an aid to interest and understanding should be sparing; perhaps judiciously employed no more than two or three times a year in any class. It is important too that the music is listened to, not played as a mere background to other matters and work. A corollary to this point is that if, as recommended, the music is accompanied by words, maps, diagrams, and color-slides, these should be thrown onto a screen or screens at the same time from one or more overhead and/or slide projectors. Except in rare circumstances, the teacher is very active but silent when the music is played.

The role of music in elementary and secondary geographic education may be linked with eight inter-related facets. The use

of a recorded musical extract or, where appropriate, the playing of an instrument by the teacher and/or student can:

(1) assist in making a point;

(2) be one means of promoting interest;

(3) lend description to anything that involves areal expression such as a French pays;

(4) point toward the "area" and/or "soul" of a group of people, especially if there be no fixed political areal identity, such as the Basques, Kurds, and Macedonians;

(5) nurture the student's emotions prior to thoughtful discussion about a particular topic such as "Famine in Mali";

(6) contribute toward inter-disciplinary approaches;

(7) foster imagination; and

(8) promote greater aesthetic awareness -- that is, a sense of beauty and a sense of the nobility of the human soul or spirit -- with regard to landscapes and human situations.

The last two facets are particularly noteworthy in justifying the occasional use of music in geographic education. Germane to the matter of imagination are the following words:

> If I were to look for a final aspect of this perpetual problem of adapting geographical material to the needs of children of varying ability it would be that of imagination . . . . The tape-recorder and the record player . . . open up yet another avenue for the imaginative teacher in his quest for reality and variety in his teaching methods. After all, enjoyment is not the least important factor in the learning process.[5]

The need for expanding the aesthetic horizons of the individual student of the late twentieth century seems almost self-evident. The considerable mediocrity and ethnocentrism of much that passes for "music" and "speech" on commercial-radio air-waves; the ugliness of urban litter; and the prurient, coarse, ungrammatical advertisements for horror movies "suitable for children" are but three aspects of our milieu which suggest to the writer that aesthetic awareness should be much more greatly emphasized in schools (and homes), especially if they are to serve the whole personality of the student. "Environmental education" and other creditable school programs are all very well, but they become relatively meaningless if the student is not also encouraged to develop a sense of beauty and a sensitive interest and compassion for his or her fellows, both at home and abroad.

Unintentional ethnocentrism is often mentioned as a problem that besets education[6] and one wonders at times if it can readily be reduced. We are all products to a large extent of our immediate, regional, and national milieux, and if we as teachers make little effort to extend beyond our milieux in aesthetic matters -- and there are many opportunities to do so -- we may seriously fail the next generation. This is particularly the case in geographic education if such matters as "international goodwill and understanding" are in any way associated with our work.

Let us take three examples drawn from European countries. They are chosen partly because when young university geography graduates were asked to identify Copenhagen, Prague, and Rome, two

of these cities were scarcely known to most of them.[7] If we are to teach, say, a lesson-unit on "Denmark" in a lower year or "The Historical Geography of Baltic Transport" in an upper one, much can be gained by reference to cultural matters which characterize the Danes (who were among the first to build railroads). At first, Hans Christian Andersen and the "mermaid" statue come to mind, but to the average Dane, the tuneful music of Hans Christian Lumbye (1810-1874) is just as representative of his country's artistic treasures. One of countless ways to begin a "Denmark" or even a "Hagerstrand Diffusion Waves" unit might be to play Lumbye's "Copenhagen Steam Railroad Galop" and, at the same time, project about six color-slides onto a screen placed alongside another which shows an overhead-projected outline map of Denmark. The route of the train westward from the capital to Esbjerg is marked on the map by an overhead-transparency pencil. An eight-hour train (and ferry) journey is, then, represented by only four minutes of music. The multi-media effect serves more than one purpose. The sequential change in landscape through Sjaelland, Fyn, and southern Jylland is evident and it is accompanied by something of the "essence" of Danish culture common to the three areas.

Concepts and terms in physical geography can usefully be linked with music. A poignant example is the Czech Vltava (in German, Die Moldau) from the symphonic cycle Ma Vlast ("My Country") composed by Bedrich Smetana in 1874 when he was totally deaf. In Smetana's words:

> This composition depicts the course of the river Vltava beginning with its two sources . . . [and]

> which flows through woods and meadows, past villages . . . through rapids, then as a broad and noble river it approaches Prague . . . .

Color slides[8] are projected onto a central screen, while two adjacent screens show such material on overhead-transparencies as Figures 1 and 2. As the music progresses from the initial flute melody representing the Vltava's sources in an immature landscape to a full-bodied orchestration portraying a graded, "broad and noble river", the teacher exposes in turn each of the diagrammatic cross-sections of the Vltava thalweg (Figure 1). An overhead-pencil is used to locate the approximate position of each projected color-slide landscape (correlating with the music) on an accompanying projected outline map (Figure 2). Few who live in western Czechoslovakia are unmoved by this music which has lived through more than one hundred years of Bohemia's chequered history. While it seems true to say that this matter tends to emphasize national spirit at a time when, in a nuclear age, an international outlook is undoubtedly of greater importance, the fact remains that nation-states still exist and appear likely to do so for many years to come. Smetana's Vltava may seem out-of-date to a gliby critical person brought up in a different milieu, but in Czechoslovakia today his music is as cogent as it was before 1919. The teacher who uses music to promote a student's interest in fluvial geomorphology can also, among other things, sow the seeds for a quicker appreciation of concepts likely to be learned in a later lesson-unit (in human geography) such as "Race, Nation, and Nation-state". (There is no need in all situations for the twelve minutes of Vltava to be played,

LONGITUDINAL PROFILE (Thalweg)

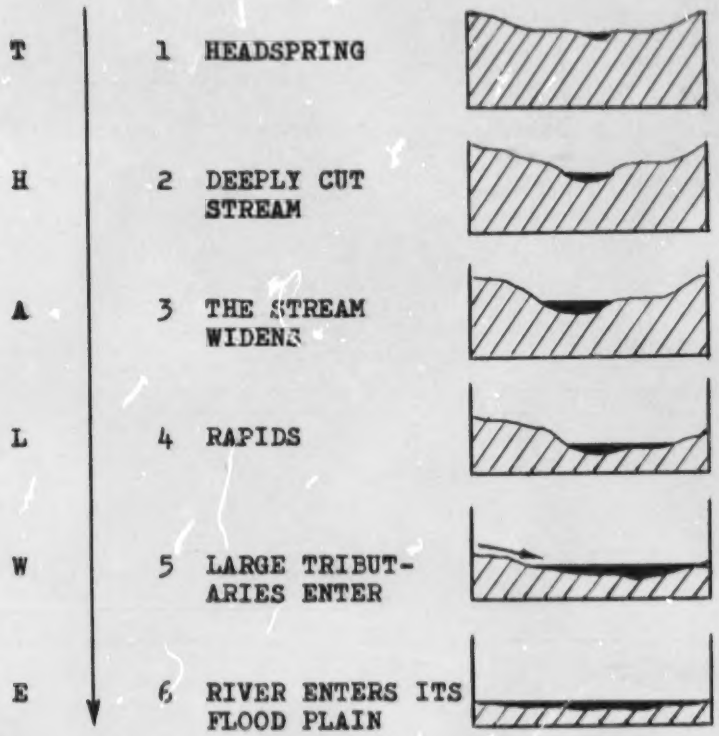


Figure 1

SKETCH DIAGRAM OF THE LONGITUDINAL PROFILE OR THALWEG, AND CROSS-SECTIONS OF THE RIVER VLTAVA (MOLDAU).

Figure 2

SKETCH MAP CORRELATING WITH
SMETANA'S "VLTAVA" (MOLDAU)

although the closing bars and the two strident chords where Smetana ends the river should never be missed.)

Nineteenth and twentieth century music is studded with themes which can properly be used to represent, if only momentarily, the "soul" of a nation. Mindful of Italian-born persons in our communities, it would be well if we become more familiar with such pieces as the four-minute "Chorus of the Israelite Slaves" from Act 3 of Verdi's Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar). When it was first performed in 1842 in Milan, a city still under Austrian domination (and literary censorship), it was interpreted by an Italian audience as a reassertion of faith in its politically-developing homeland. In 1871, 1901 (when it was involuntarily sung by thousands at Verdi's funeral), 1919, 1946, and recent years, this short operatic chorus has had similar effects. Perhaps it will again if, for instance, Trieste again enters newspaper headlines. It could be argued strongly that if a teacher or professor were to plan only three or four lessons or lectures on "Italy" or "Italian Nationalism" at any level of the educational process, the playing of a short piece of music of this kind, accompanied by overhead-projected words and by color-slides,[3] is a motivating, commanding, perhaps even mandatory, beginning to the studies.

Art in any form can convey various meanings to many. This is particularly so in the case of music, one of art's highest and subtlest forms. As E. T. A. Hoffman once said, "where language stops, music begins". Thus a variety of interpretations is justified and

understandable among any group of listeners the geography (or other) teacher may guide and assist. Basically, however, and especially with younger children, musical extracts should be chosen that each have a singularly clear message. Such music may be descriptive of, for example:

(1) land and sea scapes;

(2) climatic conditions;

(3) historical events;

or it may be evocative of the ethos and culture of:

(4) political areas; and

(5) national groups.

For each of these categories, three illustrative items are listed:

(1) The Sea: Overture "The Hebrides" (Fingal's Cave), Mendelssohn;
Overture "The Flying Dutchman", Wagner;
Four "Sea Pieces" from "Peter Grimes", Britten.

(2) Storms: Third movement, Symphony No. 6, Beethoven;
Second movement, Overture "William Tell", Rossini;
"The Royal Hunt and Storm" from "The Trojans", Berlioz.

(3) War Overture "1812", Tchaikovsky;
"The Battle of Vittoria" (1814), Beethoven;
"The Warsaw Concerto" (1939), Addinsell.

(4) China Piano Concerto "The Yellow River";[10]
"The White-haired Girl" Suite;[10]
Revolutionary Symphony "Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy".[11]

(5) The Russians: Overture "Russian Easter Festival", Rimsky-Korsakov;

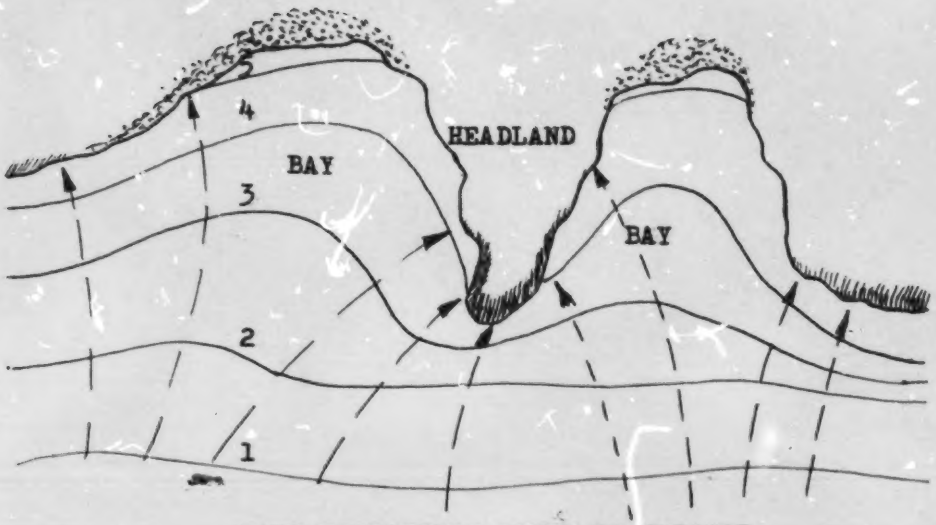
"In the Steppes of Central Asia", Borodin;

Symphony No. 7 (The Leningrad), Shostakovich.

As in the case of Smetana's Vltava, an extract from one of the above or other categories can serve at least two purposes. It can enhance the teaching of a specific topic such as "wave action" or "spatial diffusion" yet also provide a palimpsest of a cultural heritage or milieu to be studied later, either in geography or in another field.

The use of musical extracts may be illustrated by three further examples where a stereo or tape-recorder, two or three screens, color-slides, transparencies and/or other materials are employed simultaneously.

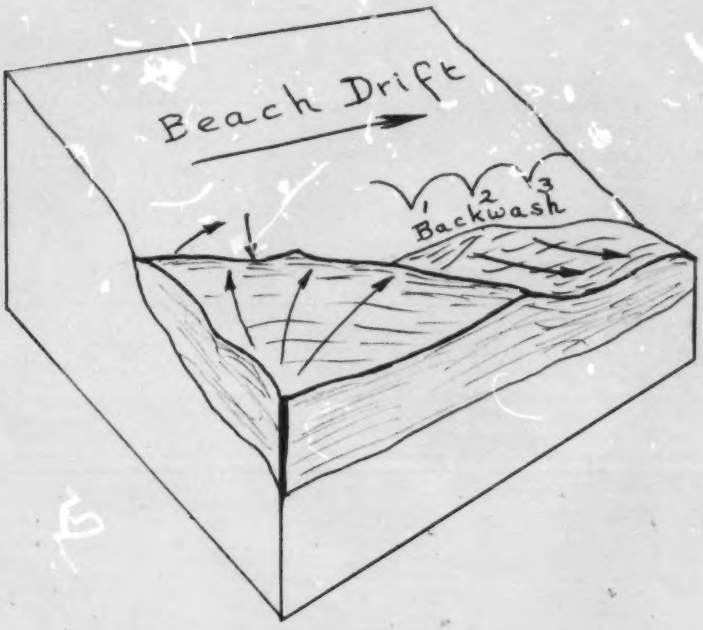
The introductory bars of Mendelssohn's "Hebrides" overture effectively portray the swell of the sea and its swash on the shore. Thus, while this music is played, four or five photographs of coastal (headland and intervening beach) scenery are shown on a central screen and Figures 3 and 4 are projected overhead onto two adjacent ones. This short-lived edpisode lends itself to considerable class discussion and adds "a third dimension" to a study of wave-action, especially if preparatory field-work is not possible. Multi-media techniques of this kind involve careful preparation, it is true, but when infrequently executed can be most pedagogically rewarding. A teacher disposed to these techniques may choose to have a "fullsome" and a truly inter-disciplinary example among



WAVE REFRACTION ALONG AN EMBAYED COAST

Figure 3

MAP DIAGRAM CORRELATING
WITH MENDELSSOHN'S "HEBRIDES"
OVERTURE



SWASH AND BACKWASH

Figure 4

BLOCK DIAGRAM CORRELATING
WITH MENDELSSOHN'S "HEBRIDES"
OVERTURE

the materials he or she devises. This involves other art forms such as a photograph of a well-known painting, the reading of a literary passage or, even, a video-tape of part of a television dramatic adaptation of a novel. Tchaikovsky's "1812" overture provides an illustration.

Over the years, the writer has found that the relevance of such terms as "terminal moraine" is not often clear to students or, on quite a different plane of thought, that "these kids have no idea where Moscow is!" as a teacher, frustrated by the lack of interest in her lessons, once put it. The "1812" overture with its graphic and melodious representation of events surrounding the Battle of Borodino can be an exciting catalyst for various inter-related concepts in lesson-units which range from "Glacial Deposition" and "The Historical Geography of Russia" to "The North European Plain" and "Soviet Settlement Patterns". If lesson time is precious (as it usually is!), the second half of the overture is sufficient to capture the students' imaginations. A photograph of Meissonier's famous painting, "Retreat from Moscow", and of a David portrait of Napoleon before 1812 are interposed between others of the two armies involved, battle scenes, and Moscow copied, for instance, from a Soviet source[12] or from plates in a handbook for a television series based on Tolstoy's War and Peace.[13] About ten to fifteen color photographs in sequential juxtaposition with the "1812"'s progressing musical themes are shown on a central screen between the projection of transparency material of the kind depicted in Figures 5 and 6. Figure 6 refers to the sequence of events

Figure 5

SKETCH MAP CORRELATING
WITH TCHAIKOVSKY'S
"1812" OVERTURE

1. A LANDSCAPE IN WESTERN RUSSIA IN 1812.

2. THE ARMY OF NAPOLEON MOVES EAST ALONG THE DRY TERMINAL MORAINES.

3. SKIRMISHES WITH THE RUSSIANS.

4. THE PEACEFUL FIELDS OF BORODINO.

5. THE BATTLE COMMENCES: "ALLONS ENFANTS DE LA PATRIE !"

6. A FRENCH VICTORY?

7. MOSCOW IS REACHED -- BUT IT IS EMPTY. NAPOLEON'S ARMY RETREATS AS THE HEAVY SNOW FALLS IN A SEVERE WINTER.

8. THE BELLS OF MOSCOW NOW REJOICE AND AN OLD RUSSIAN HYMN IS PLAYED.

9. THE TSARIST NATIONAL ANTHEM IS PLAYED AND THE GUNS OF MOSCOW FIRE A VICTORY SALUTE.

Figure 6

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS CORRELATING
WITH THE SECOND HALF OF
TCHAIKOVSKY'S
"1812" OVERTURE

dramatized by the last six minutes of the overture. When the orchestration is gentle and soft -- a representation of the quiet and as yet unspoiled fields of Borodino -- an appropriate extract from Tolstoy's novel can be read aloud thereby expressing a greater unity of art form. Without having seen a demonstration of this multi-media presentation, the reader may be unmoved by any comment here. But, in all sericusness, the writer has often wondered what the outcome of World War Two might have been if, for instance, Hitler and his generals on the Eastern front had been exposed to emotional experiences of this kind, no matter how short, in their school-day Physische Geographie or other lessons. Although the terminal moraines at first well-served Napoleon's troops in 1812 and Hitler's in 1941, the unsuccessful outcome of these incursions into "Mother Russia" probably was as much due to insufficient imagination about, and inadequate understanding of, the "soul" of the adversary among the invading military leadership as to any kind of intellectual or materialistic reason.

Like so many other composers, Tchaikovsky frequently infused "folk" tunes and rhythms -- not always indigenous ones -- into his music. In this regard, it is regretted that scarcely any space is given here to the vast and wonderfully stimulating variety of contemporary "folk" and "country" music found in all continents, let alone numerous "pop" tunes (but by no means all!) of the western world. Reference to such matters is left to others but it should not be forgotten that the most popular "tune" of today is not the Boney M's "Rivers of Babylon" or "Rasputin" but "The Yellow River"

concerto heard and loved in China by countless millions. The geography teacher who broadens his or her acquaintance with the "folk" music and other cultural aspects of a wide selection of countries cannot fail to enrich personal professional stature and enjoyment of the arts. Advisedly, the countries might include some thought likely to enter world news headlines in the next decade or so, such as Chile, Tanzania, and Syria. A wealth of "folk" music can be gleaned from radio and library sources although, admittedly, quite a number of "Third World" countries (call them what one will) are at present almost academically and journalistically ignored.

With this point in mind, let us reflect upon two verses of a "folk" song, La Carta (The Letter), written by Violeta Parra whose brother resides in a Chilean gaol and usually sung only to guitar accompaniment:

> I just received a letter
> By early morning mail
> In the letter read the news
> My brother's taken prisoner
> And ruthlessly in shackles
> Through the city they've dragged him
> Si!
>
> The letter says the crime
> Committed by Roberto
> Was to support the worker's strike
> That had already ended
> If that's indeed a crime, Sergeant
> I too should be a prisoner!
> Si!

Such words and their committal to a plaintive tune provide one of many suitable introductions to a study on and discussion about some of Latin America's social problems which often have marked areal expression. Let us also reflect upon words drawn from a Skyhooks'

"pop" song, Mercedes Ladies":

> You look so smug on your Persian Rug
> You say your Afghan's got a pedigree
> You rest your head on your antiqued bed and talk
> about your Arts degree
> You act so cool by your heated pool
> You take lunch at three
> You own half a boutique, ain't it so chic
> You work hard for charity.
> Mercedes Ladies, they look so sweet
> They get a face-lift about twice a week.

Neither the tune nor certainly the words are models of aesthetic excellence which is a factor that should generally be kept in mind by the teacher who wishes to broaden a western world student's horizons. Yet a "pop" tune of this kind is justified especially if it be to underline aspects of an indifferent, affluent society. If, for example, the Skyhooks' song is played while photographs of material surfeit and waste in the affluent world (with its beer-can litter) are shown on one screen and, contrastingly, photographs of emaciated and starving children in Mali[14] on another, there is sufficient audio-visual material to promote discussion of relevance to a lesson-unit on "World Food and Population" or similar topic.

Let us end on a hopeful and truly international note. In Schiller's words:

> No more of these sad tones!
> Let us rather raise our voices together in
> more pleasant and joyful tones!
> Joy, thou shining spark of God . . .
> Your magic reunites those whom stern
> custom has parted;
> All men will become brothers
> Under your protective wing!

These words of hope for Mankind were set to music by an economically-poor, stone deaf, but inspired man who in early life had little

formal education. The music is the last movement of Symphony No. 9 (The Choral) by Beethoven which, like other works of his, is frequently played throughout the western world although scarcely heard by many in that demographic minority. (In the 1970's such music spawned "pop" tunes suited to dominant contemporary tastes.)[15] Today, more than 150 years after Beethoven's impecunious death, we may ponder as we listen to his ninth symphony that that which is truly beautiful and emanates from a pursuit of excellence and is pregnant with meaning and universal in merit tends in the long run to survive, while "the popular" often (and rightly) is transitory and ephemeral. It is argued, then that we have as teachers a duty toward those things which can, and in their nobility should, survive as well as toward "the popular" and the seeming demands of our economically-affluent milieu. This is especially so if our students' horizons and visions are, for their age, very limited and un-aesthetically inclined as often they must seem to a person cognizant of the world. In this regard, Schiller's words at the end of Beethoven's ninth symphony carry a message for us all:

> Be embraced all ye millions
> With a kiss for all the World!

No geography teacher can ignore the spatial implications of "a kiss for all the World!" But no teacher, whatever his specialty or place in the formal educational process can ignore that "all" embraces affective and aesthetic matters such as attitudes, ideals and moral principles on the one hand, and music and related art on the other.

Let us individually gain hope, inspiration, and courage from the nobility of Schiller's and Beethoven's interwoven legacy to the world, even though it be not mentioned on the "bubble-gum cards" of our milieu. And let us remember, too, that "Even the smallest pebble can change the pattern of the water".

FOOTNOTES

1. For example, M. W. Keatinge, "Geography as a Correlating Subject", The Geographical Teacher, Vol. 1 (1901-1902), p. 147.
2. V. Cornish, "Harmonies of Scenery: An Outline of Aesthetic Geography", Geography, Vol. 14 (1927-1928), p. 394.
3. E. W. Gilbert, "The Idea of the Region", Geography, Vol. 45 (1960), p. 159.
4. See, for example, N. E. Sealey, "Editorial", Classroom Geographer (Jan., 1975), p. 2.
5. J. T. White in New Movements in the Study and Teaching of Geography, edited by N. Graves (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1972), p. 152.
6. More than any other factor, 'ethnocentrism" was mentioned by members attending the I. G. U. Commission for Geography in Education in 1972 (at Laval University, Québec) as a major negative influence in geography teaching. (Unpublished: writer's observation.)
7. J. H. Wise, "Student Deficiency in Basic World Knowledge", The Journal of Geography, Vol. 74 (Nov., 1975), p. 480.
8. Color slides, for instance, taken photographically from plates in A. E. J. Morris, "Four Towns in a Bohemian Setting", The Geographical Magazine, Vol.45 (1972-1973), pp. 814-819.
9. A set of color slides of Nabucco can be obtained from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, W. C. 2., U. K.
10. Composed collectively by the Central Philharmonic Society of China.
11. Composed collectively by the Shanghai Philharmonic Society.
12. Twelve post-cards linking scenes of the Borodino panorama, published by Planeta (Moscow, 1975).

13. Published by the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1972. Photographs taken from the Soviet film of "War and Peace" appear in C. Duffy, Borodino (London: Sphere Books, 1972).

14. Several large color plates of such children appeared in a Sunday Times' (London) supplement of 1973.

15. "The Song of Joy" (based on the last movement of Beethoven's ninth symphony) was a major "pop" song in 1970, and the Big Apple Band version of the first movement of the fifth symphony proved appealing to many in 1976.